DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 325 817 CS 010 304

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TITLE Teacher Expectations: Modifying One's Teaching through the Self-Monitoring Process.
PUB DATE Nov 89
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association (33rd, Philadelphia, PA, November 3-5, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Discussion (Teaching Technique); Educational Research; Grade 3; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Primary Education; *Reading Instruction; *Student Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Expectations of Students; Teacher Student Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Self Monitoring

ABSTRACT

A pilot study examined teacher expectations and how expectations are manifested in student participation in class discussions. Subjects, 10 third-grade student teachers, were observed as they led a discussion of a story following silent reading and participated in a self-monitoring process. Using a seating chart, the university student teaching supervisor completed a participation guide on the lesson and later met with the student teacher to plan strategies for including all students in discussions in subsequent lessons. Results indicated that 81% of the students participated in discussions and that the student teachers seemed eager to devise ways to include all students in discussions. (One figure of data is included.) (RS)

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TEACHER EXPECTATIONS: MODIFYING ONE'S TEACHING THROUGH THE SELF-MONITORING PROCESS

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Running head: Expectations: Modifying Teaching

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TEACHER EXPECTATIONS: MODIFYING ONE'S TEACHING THROUGH THE SELF-MONITORING PROCESS

Identifying characteristics of effective teachers of reading who make a difference in what students learn has been a fruitful area of inquiry in the last twenty years (Wittrock, 1986). Many of the qualities of effective teachers of reading identified in studies of classroom teaching have centered on their use of time in the classroom (i.e. maximizing time-on-task through effective use of groups and materials utilizing the direct instruction approach). Yet, one characteristic of effective instruction focuses on what teachers believe and the consequences of such beliefs. Studies have shown a positive relationship between teacher expectations and student achievement (Ashton & Webb, 1986). It is a truism that one's expectations for students in reading instruction may bias one's actions and influence subsequent learning. In such instances, students sense what is expected of them in reading and behave accordingly. A teacher's expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus, teachers' expectations are a powerful force in effective teaching.

Teacher Expectations

Good and Brophy (1987) have studied the area of teacher expectations and student achievement in great detail. While it is advisable to hold high expectations for students in reading, it is also important that expectations are realistic in terms of diagnostic information collected on a student. High performance expectations that are consistently impossible for students to reach will erode student effort.

On the other hand, it is encouraging to know that a teacher's expectations may not have effects on individual students. Some students are not as susceptible to teachers' expectations as others.

However, when low expectations do have negative effects on students, the result can be devastating to student growth.

The following is a summary by Brophy and Good of the effects of low expectations communicated to students.

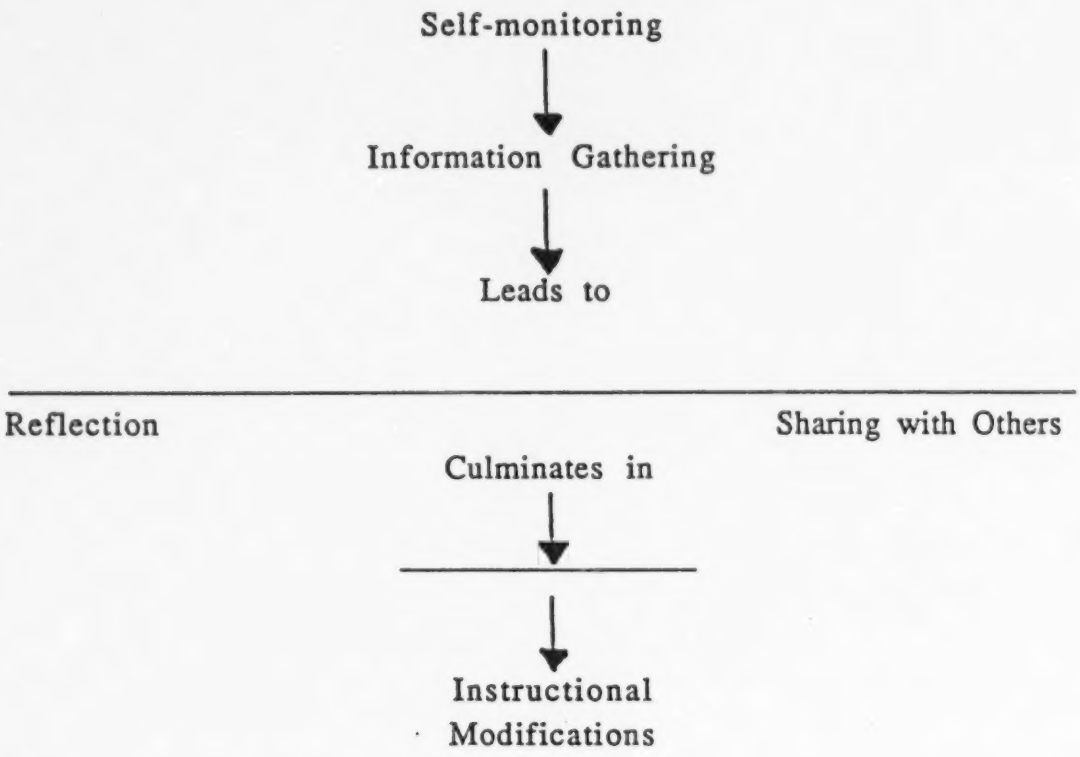
* receive less instruction and are expected to do less work
* receive less frequent praise
* are called on less often, receive less time to respond to
* questions, and are asked predominantly factual questions
* are seated farther from their teachers, receive less eye contact, and are smiled at less often
* are criticized more frequently for incorrect responses
* receive less help in difficult situations
* receive less acceptance and use of ideas

One of the primary results of low expectations is the exclusion of students from the teaching-learning process. Simply put, some students who are the recipients of low expectations are rarely involved in the teaching lesson. These students are not called on to answer questions and rarely volunteer information during a lesson.

Self-Monitoring Process

With the current focus on empowering teachers, which places emphasis on teacher decision-making, it is imperative that all teachers, especially teachers-in-training, are aware of the possible effects of low teacher expectations on student performance in reading and reflect on ways to monitor one's instruction in this important area. One method to utilize with teachers to view reality in their classrooms (in this case whether or not certain students are included in class discussions) is to engage teachers in a self-monitoring process (Blair, 1988). The self-monitoring process involves collecting and examining data on one's effectiveness. This process is facilitated by having a colleague or supervisor systematically observe classroom events and provide feedback on

one's teaching. Once information is collected on one's teaching, a teacher is in a position to reflect on the information and discuss perceptions with fellow teachers and supervisors. This process makes one aware of strengths and weaknesses in an instructional program and points the way for modifications and improvements. The following is a depiction of the self-monitoring process.



Procedures

In an effort to have teachers-in-training gain a closer, rather than perfunctory, examination of the area of teacher expectations and how expectations are often manifested in student participation in class discussions, ten grade three teachers-in training were observed during their student teaching experience and also participated in a self-monitoring process. The university student teaching supervisor observed each student teacher leading a discussion of a story following silent reading. Using a seating chart,

the supervisor completed a participation guide on the lesson. The supervisor placed a check mark in the appropriate block if a question was directed to the student and a plus sign in the block if the student volunteered a response. Following the lesson, the university supervisor met privately first with each student teacher to examine the results of the participation guide and second together with the student teacher and his/her cooperating teacher to plan strategies for including all students in discussions in subsequent lessons.

Findings and Discussion

The completion of a participation guide on each person yielded the number of students who were involved in the lesson and the identification of those children who were not involved at all in the lesson. Across the ten student teacher observations, 80.9% of the third grade students participated in the lessons and 19.1% of the students did not participate (see Figure 1).

As stated, following each observation, the university supervisor conferenced with each student teacher individually and reviewed the results of the participation guide. In an effort to help student teachers think and reflect on the results of the participation guide, the supervisor led a discussion by asking the following questions.

1. Which students were asked more questions? Why?
2. Were there particular groups of students sitting together that received more attention? Why?
3. Which students volunteered readily in class discussions?
4. Which students did not respond in class?
5. Why do you think they did not respond?

Student teacher responses demonstrated a growing understanding of the teaching process and a greater awareness of its subtleties and complexities. The following are some examples of their comments to the above questions:

"I usually call on Anglo males and females as well as some Black males who have their hand raised more often... Some of them need extra practice...others were called on to 'help out' those who

didn't know an answer...High level students are frequently on task... I usually stand close to their tables..because they usually are on task and I expect correct answers. I tend to call on them [higher level students]...I just realized that I am calling on the boys more than girls and maybe that is why the girls don't volunteer as much...The high ability groups were asked questions most often because the low groups take longer in understanding...I guess I usually call on students who sit close to each other at one time...Jennifer is so quiet and often forgotten about.

This pilot study was concerned with the process of self-monitoring and as such did not include the formal completion of a second participation guide to measure progress. Yet, simply being aware of a potential problem area does not necessarily translate into positive changes. However, informal discussions with both student teachers and their cooperating teachers were encouraging. Once aware of an area needing improvement, student teachers seemed eager to devise ways to include all students in discussions and not fall prey to the familiar trap of only asking certain students to answer discussion questions. Because of the initial success of the self-monitoring process in this pilot study, it is recommended this method of changing teacher behavior be tested empirically to determine its significance.

Conclusions

This process of self-monitoring to gain a 'snapshot' of one's teaching is related directly to the premise that the teaching act be both purposeful and reflective. Since teacher expectations can be communicated through classroom interactions, checking to make sure all students participate in discussions is one means of ensuring sound instruction to all students.

It is paramount for teachers-in-training to not only be aware of the power of one's expectations on children but be able to change one's classroom actions to ensure that all students are receiving instruction to meet their needs. To this end, teachers need to be trained to be reflective, self-monitoring professionals. Effective teachers think constantly about what happens in their classrooms;

they monitor their own action and they devise activities and responses to the ways their students act. Self-monitors reflect about their teaching and ask "Why am I doing what I am doing?" The argument presented in this paper is that teachers-in-training need to be careful observers of their classroom teaching and self-monitor how their expectations are manifested during reading instruction. Most of all, it has asked that attention be paid to the quality of classroom experiences provided to students during reading instruction.

References

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READING LESSON PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

UDENT TEACHER	TOTAL # STUDENTS	# PARTICIPATING	% PARTICIPATING	#NON-PARTICIPATING	% NON-PARTICIPATIN
A	21	13	61.9%	8	38.1%
B	19	15	71.4%	4	28.6%
C	18	16	88.8%	2	11.2%
D	18	16	88.8%	2	11.2%
E	22	18	81.8%	4	18.2%
F	18	15	83.3%	3	16.7%
G	21	13	61.9%	8	38.1%
H	23	21	91.3%	2	87.0%
I	18	16	88.8%	2	11.2%
J	16	14	87.5%	2	12.5%
TOTALS	194	157	80.9%	37	19.0%

Figure 1. Participation Summary